

TAB

REPORTING OF INFORMATION I

I believe that the best approach we can make to this abbreviated course in reporting is, first, to tell you what we consider important, why we consider these few things important, and what we hope to do about them.

With no more ado, then, we consider the elements of basic composition to be important, elements which you studied in grammar school and high school but probably not in college - and if these things are familiar to you, if you put these elements to use automatically, whenever you sit down to write, then you have a major part of the game here won already.

We have no intention here of teaching syntax, etc. We assume that you have a working knowledge of this. We do place emphasis, for the purpose of this course, on five general areas: Specificity, objectivity, clarity, completeness, and accuracy. I will speak more particularly about these features later.

A second thing we consider important is the heading of the report, particularly the evaluation and source description.

A third thing we consider important is the meeting of a deadline set for the completion of the report. As was explained to you this morning, the staff will guarantee that each report is returned to you before you begin a second one, and that there will be a critique of the exercise; thus, you will have the benefit of the corrections on one before you begin a subsequent exercise.

Now I hope to make clear to you one important fact: This week is orientation; the time is not enough for anything except orientation. The scope, then, will be limited. We will use for all of our work form 210-3, the form used in reporting to headquarters from the field. We will be concerned only with straight information report writing. We shall not concern ourselves with reporting of operational data. Since we assume that everyone here has had Basic

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Orientation, we shall not concern ourselves with dissemination in the field or dissemination at Headquarters. We have then one report form which we shall use: Attachment A of the booklet, [REDACTED]

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Our handbook will be [REDACTED] In this connection I wish to point out that during the first two days it would be wise to go through the handbook so that before Reporting of Information II you may have questions formulated concerning anything which is not clear that you may read. For this connection, also, I might say that these two lectures on reporting will be only a delineation of the material presented in this handbook.

Now, as to the reason that these elements are considered important - In the first place, the report is the thing which gives the Intelligence Community the information which they need. The report is the thing by which the members of the IAC Agencies make their judgment of CIA, particularly in this instance, the Clandestine Services. The clandestinely procured report is frequently the one piece that fills a gap in the big intelligence picture which will determine US policy.

Because of the use made of the report, then, emphasis is correctly placed on the basic elements of composition, since a knowledge of these elements, laboriously learned, or badly taught in our schools, will certainly make for clarity - and without clarity any report is useless. Objectivity, specificity, accuracy, and completeness, are features that must be watched at all times, since a report lacking these things may be of little value.

The formal heading of the report, the second thing we emphasize, has been set up for a good purpose. A knowledge of the exact date of information, the exact place where it was procured, the exact date of the report puts the information within a frame of reference which can be used by our customers who are

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fitting this material into a mosaic where extensive research has been done and where reports from other agencies will provide a backdrop against which our report will be read; thus, the time and the place, accurately noted, are important. It is obvious that the description of the source of the information, including, in guarded terms, his access to the target, his bias, his background, etc., will make more meaningful the material included; then, finally, the preliminary evaluation of the source and the preliminary appraisal of content will determine for our customers how much weight this report should carry in their deliberations.

The emphasis we place on the deadline for the report has been explained. We want you to benefit, wherever you can, from corrections and suggestions which are made on your papers and in the critique.

Now for the final introductory note: We are aware that the practice in handling the writing of reports differs somewhat from division to division. Since we cannot adopt all of the practices, and since the field instructions are sound, we shall adhere to the policies established in these instructions. If they disagree with the practice as you know it, we shall still, for this one week, use the practice which is outlined in the handbook.

To approach the problem, then, let's begin with the most elementary of all of the principles of reporting: who, what, when, where, how much, and how many. You will note that why and how are not listed here. If we ask the question why? very frequently we will be led into the trap of interpretation - and it is not our job as report writers to interpret; that is, we do not inject our own thoughts, beliefs, or prejudices, objectively is what we seek. What took place? Who was involved? When did it happen? Where did it happen, etc. - First, then, we want strict objectivity.

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How much and how many are the other two elements which will guide in writing. Numbers, weight, dimensions, or any unit used in telling about an event or place should be specific. Specificity then is an element, that we must constantly keep in mind.

Completeness, telling all that is essential to the reader of the report is, of course, necessary - but there is a limitation here: We never include in the information report any operational data. Remember that even though this report is edited in the field and at Headquarters, it has happened in the past that reports which had been disseminated were found to have operational material included. Remember that the report is being disseminated to the IAC Agencies. They have no need to know and are denied our operational material. Also in gaining completeness there may be a tendency to include too much. We would not include information that is overt and doesn't belong in a GS report - unless it necessary to explain another piece of information in the report. Under the conditions stated, the necessity for explanation, overt material will appear.

Clarity is, of course, essential, since without clarity the wrong meaning can be derived. Clarity rests on an intelligent use of the basic principles of syntax. We have to be alert to these principles constantly.

Accuracy is a must, as can be readily seen, if any reporting is to be meaningful. Lack of accuracy may cause a big waste of money, but more important, may lead to formulation of foreign policy which will backfire because of misinformation.

#### STYLE

Some time ago I read the introductory sentence in a short story by - I believe it was Hemingway. It went as follows: "I leaned against the bar. I

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heard a shot. I looked. My hand was gone." Now I believe here we have a sample of reporting which is stylized but still is closer to the thing we are looking for than would be the following, selected at random from Thomas Wolfe: "I think the true discovery of America is before us. I think the true fulfillment of our spirit, of our people, of our mighty and immortal land is yet to come. I think the true discovery of our democracy is still before us. And I think that all these things are as certain as the morning, as inevitable as noon. I think I speak for most men living when I say that our America is here, is now, and beckons on before us, and that this glorious assurance is not only our living hope, but our dream to be accomplished."

Now, the only point of these two quotations is that they both are stylized, they both say something, but for our purposes certainly the first approaches much closer to what we are attempting, in a number of respects, than does the latter. Note that in the first there are no adjectives (Repeat quote). The sentences are short. The language is simple. There is a direct account of something that happened. Now certainly it might well be that we want more information than is there, we might need for our business to know the name of the bar, the fence at the bar where the protagonist stood, the calibre of the gun, the number of people present, their names, etc. We might want more specificity, objectivity. (Can one be objective if he has just been shot?) We might want a more complete report, etc.

I shall not labor this, other than to point out that in the second quotation we have language which is poetic, but which certainly lacks specificity. "Our America is here" What does it mean? Is it specific? Is it accurate? Where is here? "I think the true discovery of our democracy is still before us, and I think that all things are as certain as the morning, as inevitable as noon."

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to another, is certainly something that would be highly questionable as far as specificity is concerned. The use of poetic similes, although it sounds good, would be eliminated in a report.

We come then to basic principles: A report must be clear. All vague or ambiguous constructions must be avoided. Each sentence should have one meaning and one meaning only.

Ex. 1: The civil servants in the government are dissatisfied with the new ministers, because they have revolutionary aims.  
(Who have these aims?—The ministers or the servants?)

Ex. 2: A field of mines of undetermined size. (Which is undetermined? The size of the mines or the size of the field?)

Ex. 3: The audience applauded John Jones, the chairman of the committee and the local organizer. (Did they applaud 1, 2, or 3 persons?)

#### SPECIFICITY

General terms should be avoided. Choose terms that are specific, concrete, factual. Note the progression from the general to the specific in the following:  
Thing, machine, automobile, sedan, 1 black 1949 Ford 4-door sedan.

Perhaps you are reporting on a factory. If you reported as follows you would be far from specific: "All floor space, heavy machinery, and other equipment is being utilized to the best advantage, and production is at a comparatively high level."

How much floor space?  
What heavy machinery? What other equipment?  
How being utilized?  
What is a comparatively high level of production?

Dimensions, quantities, magnitudes. These should be stated as exactly as possible. Words like "long", "large", "cheap", "high" are useless. Their connotations vary according to the frame of reference.

How large, for instance, is a large class. Ten thousand dollars is a large

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sum to me - but is it a large sum to the United States Treasury, Bing Crosby, or Nelson Rockefeller?

ACCURACY

A report which is clear and specific will, nevertheless, be of little or no value unless it is also accurate. Care should be taken that all numbers, dimensions, statistics, and dates are correct. In the interest of accuracy, approximate figures should be stated as such.

Accuracy in estimating the size of a crowd is particularly difficult. It is said that Tex Rickard, when he was promoting fights, could look over a crowd of approximately 10,000 and estimate the number almost exactly. Most of us cannot do that; neither can we observe accurately a scene, room, or a machine. You have special training in this sort of thing, but you can do only harm unless you know your limitations when you write your report.

The spelling of names, both of people and of places, is particularly important. It is known that a typist changed one letter in the name of a town in a report and caused the death of an agent. Instead of dropping in to one town, the name of which differed in spelling from another by only one letter, he dropped into the second town and was immediately picked up. Certainly the Senate Investigating Committee proved during the past two years that not only the spelling of a name correctly, but also qualifying identification must be made exactly or real confusion will result.

Direct quotations should be avoided. It is the rare person who can reproduce exactly what has been said - and a change of wording could well make a distinct difference in meaning.

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COMPLETENESS

A report should contain all significant information available at the time the report is written.

No simple rule can be laid down as to what is significant. Significance is determined largely by good judgment. Whatever the heading of a report may be, facts, such as dates, places, names, and titles should appear in the text, so that whoever is reading the report will have the necessary identifying information in the proper place to give meaning to a sentence or a paragraph without reference to something which has gone before or will follow after the statement.

The criterion of completeness will eliminate from a report the type of general statement which appears to be factual, but is, in fact, unsupported conclusion.

Ex. 1: The peasant's morale is low. (Evidence should be cited. Specific indicents or facts should be given.)

Ex. 2: The food situation is deteriorating: What is rationed? What is available? If the reader has facts, he can decide for himself if the situation is deteriorating.

There is a common practice in which all of us indulge in speaking and writing. I refer to the use of the passive voice, which in itself is not incorrect, but which can lead to misunderstanding and lack of completeness.

Ex. 1: It is believed that (who believes?) arrangements have been completed (who completed them?) for the purchase of precision instruments.

Complete: The informant believes that Joseph Doaks has completed arrangements for Harry James to purchase precision instruments.

Such expressions as "It is observed that..." or "It is reported that..." are worthless statements of the obvious and should be omitted. Also there is a lack of clarity inherent in such statements.

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NEGATIVE INFORMATION

The fact that certain events did not happen or that certain elements were not present in a situation is frequently significant.

Ex. In the report of a riot or a mass meeting, the fact that nobody wore orchids would be irrelevant; but the fact that nobody carried placards or banners might be significant.

In making a report complete it is inevitable that some overt information will appear.

Ex. If a report were to mention George Panagoulos, he should be identified as Chief of Montgomery County Police. This is overt information, but probably not widely enough known to make it something to omit from the report; however, it is obvious that Dwight Eisenhower, John Foster Dulles, or Richard Nixon would need no further identification, generally, to make the report complete.

OBJECTIVITY

Reporting must be objective and factual. The emotions and feelings of the reporter or editor do not belong in a report, and must not be allowed to color it.

Objectivity is fairly easy to attain in such matters as the number of freight cars passing through a certain junction. It is difficult, however, in some cases of reporting, where one is often dealing with emotions, states of mind, and other intangibles. Everyone has some prejudices and they may appear in a report through phrasing or choice of words.

Ex. 1: eloquent speech	fanatical speech
statesman	politician
firm	obstinate
strategic withdrawal	retreat

Ex. 2: "Appeasement" is a good example of a word which once had a straightforward meaning, but has recently become emotionally colored.

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Ex. 3:	<u>Washington Post</u>	<u>Times Herald</u>	<u>Daily Worker</u>
(headline)	Truman Rebukes MacArthur on Formosa Stand	Truman Denounced for MacArthur Gag	MacArthur Spills Beans on Formosa Plans; Belies Truman
(Text)	Truman directed MacArthur to withdraw a statement.	Truman personally ordered MacArthur to withdraw a statement.	The statement was suppressed by Truman.

Ex. 4: It may have been reported that a respected minister of the gospel was seen at a hotel on a certain evening in the company of a lady, not his wife. This fact may be completely true, but the report will be grossly misleading if the minister's wife was also present and if the occasion was a public meeting to raise funds for the church.

#### PARAGRAPHS

A paragraph should be long enough to develop one idea thoroughly. Paragraphs should be arranged according to logical progression of one's thinking.

Paragraphs usually run from fifty to three hundred and fifty words. They do not usually exceed seventy five.

Short paragraphs are desirable, because they are easier to read.

#### SENTENCES

Sentences within a paragraph should bear some relation to each other. Do not put unrelated thoughts into a single sentence. Do not make the structure so complicated that the sentence is unclear or hard to read. Even though you may get a choppy report, it is better thus than to have long sentences with much subordination. Rambling, unclear, lacking in coordination.

Ex. 1: The building program undertaken last year, which is under the direction of John Doe, prominent architect, was expected to be finished in time for use during the summer season of 1954, and although it now appears that this hope will not be fulfilled, several interested groups have expressed an interest in renting space, the most important being The American Alloy Co., which has branch offices throughout the East and which apparently wishes to take over the entire structure when it is finished, presumably in the Spring of 1955.

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without progress or sequence. The writer has not decided what one thing he wishes to say in the sentence.

Ex. 2: The police believe the Communists killed the prefect, because he was becoming popular, for he was cheered by the people on 21 February, the day 21 trucks arrived from Rome, which the prefect was responsible for obtaining.

(Note: Here is a sentence that is overloaded with a number of unrelated facts which could hardly go into a single paragraph: The police theory, the prefect's increasing popularity, a demonstration in his favor, the arrival of the trucks, the prefect's responsibility for them.)

#### WORDS

For effective communication of facts and ideas in writing, the choice of words should conform to current good usage. Correctness and clearness can be assured only by the use of words commonly understood and approved of by literate people.

To be avoided:

Slang. The meaning is not exactly defined or generally known. What, for example, is a "gimmick"?

Colloquialisms. These are words or phrases which are acceptable in informal speech but are too inaccurate or careless for formal writing. Example: "funny" in the sense of "odd" or "strange"

Contractions. Examples: wouldn't; can't; don't; they're

Foreign words. Do not use such words as "infra," "en passant," "modus vivendi," for which there are adequate English equivalents. If a foreign word must be used, a translation should be provided for the reader.

Tritis, hackneyed phrases. The use of worn-out expressions destroys the effectiveness of the text. Examples: checkered career; doomed to disappointment; consensus of opinion; motley crowd; feverish haste; untiring efforts

Loose, generalized words. Examples: thing, factor, proposition

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RUMORS

Rumors are seldom of significance and should not be reported, unless they are of such importance that the mere fact of their existence is itself an item of information. A rumor, for example, regardless of whether or not it is true, to the effect that Argentina is concentrating troops for an invasion of Chile may, if it is circulated widely and believed, so affect Chilean politics, economics, and military activities that the rumor itself is a reportable item of information. Some rumors, even though not widely believed or circulated, still may be reportable if they are indicative of the propaganda activities of a foreign government or group.

OPINIONS

The opinions of most people are of no significance and are not worth reporting. An opinion, however, expressed by the chief of government of a great power, on a subject of importance, usually will be a reportable item of information, regardless of the accuracy of the opinion, because the fact that he holds this opinion may have a bearing on future events.

GOVERNMENT GOBBLEDY GOOK

A. Are you saying only what is necessary to make your report complete?

Ex. Dear Senator Strong:

Reference is made to your letter of February 18, 1949, transmitting copies of medical certificates from Heligrad physicians in respect to the physical condition of Dr. Giulio Gello, who is an applicant for an immigration visa at the American Embassy, Heligrad, Heligaria.

It is noted that both you and Dr. Gello are desirous of having the chest X-ray films forwarded to the Public Health Service here in Washington for interpretation and advice as to the appropriate certification in connection with Dr. Gello's application for an immigration visa.

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Please be advised that I am this day informing the Chief, Visa Division, Department of State that this office will be pleased to review the chest X-ray films in the case of Dr. Gello and advise whether a class "A" or a class "B" medical certificate would be appropriate in connection with his application for an immigration visa.

This might well be cut down from more than 140 words to 75, with added clarity when the clutter of words is removed:

We shall be glad to review the chest X-rays in the case of Dr. Giulio Gello as an applicant for an immigration visa at our embassy in Heligrad, Heligaria. On our check of the X-rays, along with the medical certificates you enclosed with your letter of February 18, we can advise the State Department as to whether Dr. Gello should get a class A or class B medical certificate. I am writing to this effect to the Chief, Visa Division.

B. Do you write groups of words where one word will serve?

of the order of magnitude of.....about  
for the purpose of.....for  
in the nature of.....like  
along the lines of.....like  
prior to.....before  
subsequent to.....after  
in connection with.....by, in, for, etc.  
(give the connection)  
with respect to.....about, in, etc.  
with reference to.....about  
with regard to.....about  
in the amount of.....for  
on the basis of.....by, from, etc.  
in accordance with.....by  
on the occasion of.....when, on  
in the event that.....if  
in the case of.....if  
in view of the fact that.....since, because  
for the reason that.....since  
with a view to.....to  
despite the fact that.....though

C. Do you use extra words which can be squeezed out?

You are advised that the schedule should be sent directly to this office as promptly as possible.

Your attention is directed to section 7 which says . . .

Attached there is sent to you for guidance and information

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Enclosed herewith . . . Attached hereto (Where else would it be attached?)

PLANNING

- A. Know exactly why you're writing.
- B. Put yourself in the place of your reader.
- C. Make a mental or written outline.
- D. Tell the reader what it's about.

Suppose an elevator starts at the first floor with six passengers, and stops at the next floor where four people get out and two get on; it continues upward to the next floor where three get on and no one gets off, but at the following floor two get off, at the next floor two get on and three get off.

Saying grace: We are in receipt of your favors of recent date and wish to advise that we are fully appreciative of same. Hoping to merit your continued courtesy we remain . . .

Sincerely yours -

Final --

A fresh-out-of-school newspaper reporter was instructed by the editor to never state anything as a fact that he could not verify from personal knowledge.

Sent out to cover an important social event soon afterward, he turned in the following story:

"A woman giving the name of Mrs. Roscoe Astorbilt, who is reported to be one of the society leaders of the city, is said to have given what is purported to be a party yesterday for a number of alleged ladies. The hostess claims to be the wife of a reputed attorney."